DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 473 SP 023 250

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TITLE What Undergraduate Students Expect from Preservice Field Experiences.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Canada, April 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Cooperating Teachers; *Education Majors; *Expectation; *Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Program Effectiveness; *Student Attitudes; *Teaching Experience; Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

Research about student attitudes toward preservice teaching experience focused on two primary questions: (1) What do undergraduate education students expect from early field experiences? and (2) What underlying construct can be inferred from these expectations which may be useful in shaping future experiences? Two types of data were collected from two separate samples of students. First, 354 personal accounts of expectations were recorded by 197 students prior to having early field experiences. A checklist of 57 student expectations was developed from responses. A second sample of 291 students from 8 different college/university sources responded to the checklist. Factors were named to reflect areas of students' expectations for: (1) assessing the complexities of teaching; (2) modeling professional practice; (3) acquiring practical insights and ideas; (4) practicing teaching skills; (5) understanding a variety of school and classroom settings; and (6) dealing directly with students. An analysis is presented in this paper of responses to each of these factors. A discussion of the findings' implications includes the suggestion that preservice teachers should be clearly instructed about the purpose of field experiences and told specifically what to expect during each experience. (JD)

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WHAT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS EXPECT

from

PRESERVICE FIELD EXPERIENCES

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association in Montreal, April 1983.

The authors wish to express appreciation to Kent State University, Bureau of Research Training and Services, and the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Computer Services, for their assistance in coding and analyzing the data contained in this paper.

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Field experiences represent an important dimension of the teacher education curriculum. Since AACTE endorsed the field-oriented approach in 1976, several states have significantly increased the amount of required early field experiences (Robinson and Mosrie, 1979). The underlying assumption is that field experiences not only provide preservice teachers with a variety of instructional opportunities, but they also enable prospective teachers to better confront, psychologically and pedagogically, the realities of teaching.

Book, Byers and Freeman (1983) in a recent study on student expectations and teacher education, found, not surprisingly, that most preservice teachers continue to view "experience as the best teacher." Given this belief that field experiences are the best source of professional knowledge, the researchers wanted to determine specifically what preservice teachers expected they would learn from their exposure to the classroom reality and to determine how those expectations might influence teacher educators.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Research on field experiences is still relatively limited. Much of the empirical work completed with regard to field experiences has focused on student teaching. Only recently have researchers begun to investigate the nature of the pre-student teaching component.

Scherer (1979), for example, attempted to determine the effects of early field experiences on student teachers' self-concepts and performance. She found that early field experiences did positively effect self-concept, but had little or no effect on the student teachers' performance. Scherer observed that preservice teachers with

early field experiences "had significantly more positive self-concepts than the NF (no early field experience) student teachers by the end of student teaching, whereas both groups had very similar self-concept scores at the beginning of student teaching" (pp. 212-213). Sunal (1980) was also interested in the long-term effects of pre-student teaching field experiences, but unlike Scherer, he found that early field experiences did not appear to make a significant difference in student teacher perceptions of role expectations or teacher behaviors.

Southall and Dumas (1981) conducted a survey to determine what types of activities were expected of students during early field experiences. They found that field experiences varied tremendously in content and nature with some early field experiences "involving students in actual planning and full-class instruction, while others restrict the experience to observation and non-instruction related activities" (p. 208).

Marso (1971) found that students with early field experiences did perceive that they were more prepared for teaching than were their peers who had no opportunities for classroom instruction prior to student teaching. In a similar study, Burton and Osborn (1979) used the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) to determine the effects of early field experience involvement. They found that field experiences did have a salutary effect on the preservice teachers' overall attitude toward teaching.

Applegate and Lasley (1982, 1983) conducted studies to determine both the expectations and problems of cooperating teachers for early field experience students. In the 1983 expectation study, the researchers identified four factors: (1) expectations for field

experience student (FES) behaviors and attitudes; (2) expectations for FES initiative and enthusiasm; (3) expectations for FES adaptability and support; and (4) expectations for FES professionalism. In the problem study (Applegate and Lasley, 1982), six problem areas surfaced: (1) problems with the FES' orientation to teaching; (2) problems in understanding the partnership of teaching; (3) problems with FES professionalism; (4) problems with the FES' attitudes and values; (5) problems with the FES' enthusiasm for teaching; and, (6) problems with the FES' planning and organizational skills.

This investigation was conducted as a follow-up to the cooperating teacher research cited above and represents part one of a two part study on field experience students. In this study the focus was on identifying the field experience students' expectations for early field experiences. The researchers postulated that if knowledge about what field experience students expect were available, teacher educators could structure field experiences that build on those expectations and possibly reduce the number of problems preservice teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors confront once field activities are initiated. Specifically, the research focused on two primary research questions:

1. What do preservice teachers expect to learn from early field experiences?

2. What underlying constructs can be inferred from the early field experience students' expectations?

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed for this study was used in several earlier studies conducted by Cruickshank, Kennedy and Myers (1974),

Cruickshank (1975), Applegate (1978), and Applegate and Lasley (1982, 1983).

There were two phases in the data collection process. The first phase included the collection of descriptions from students about what they expect to learn in their field experiences. Three hundred and fifty-four (354) descriptions were recorded by 197 students enrolled in teacher preparation courses from eight of Ohio's teacher training institutions. The colleges varied in size, geographic location and were a combination of public and private institutions.

Phase two included a sample (n=291) which was drawn from the same group of Ohio colleges and universities, except two institutions were added to improve the representativeness of the institutional sample. Again the institutions varied in geographic location and size; six were private and four were public. Representatives from each institution (typically the dean or head of teacher education for private institutions and field experience coordinator for state universities) were sent approximately 50 "Field Experience Student Check Lists-1" (FESCL-1) forms (total of 500 forms) and asked to distribute them to students enrolled in a course with a field experience requirement. The reseachers also asked that the forms be distributed to both elementary and secondary level students. From the 500 forms distributed, 291 forms or approximately 60% of the FESCL-1's were returned and analyzed. Sixty-five (65) of the students were male; 226 were female. Two hundred thirty-nine (239) students reported having earlier field experiences. One hundred thirty-four (134) were college freshmen; 105 sophomores; 41 juniors and 3 were seniors.

INSTRUMENTATION

Subjects in phase one were asked to complete two forms which called for students to describe what they would like to learn about or do during their field experiences. The instrument asked the teachers to complete a sentence stem: "In my field experiences, I want to ..." Each student was given two forms. A sample student response was:

> "In my field experiences I want to see first-hand how teachers discipline students. I've heard about all the methods and I can't decide which will be best for me. Maybe, if I see some teachers work with discipline problems it will help me make up my mind."

In phase two of the study the descriptions collected during phase one were used to develop items for an instrument entitled "Field Experiences Student Check List-1." Respondents were asked to indicate, on a Likert-type scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, whether they expected particular experiences or skills from their field experiences. Examples of three items that appear on the FESCL-1 are provided below:

SA	A	U	D	SD		
—	—	—	—	—	1.	I want to see if I'm really going to like teaching.
—	—	—	—	—	2.	I want to find out how teachers keep students interested in learning.
—	—	—	—	—	3.	I want to learn how to keep the attention of the whole class.

For each of 57 items on the checklist, preservice students provided information about their expectations for working in the upcoming field experience.

ANALYSIS

To determine what pre-student teachers expect from early field experiences, an item analysis was conducted. Simple descriptive

statistics were used to determine which items held most agreement for students. These items or expectations are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Items with Mean 4.5

Item	Expectations	Mean
3	I want to gain some ideas to make my lessons more interesting.	4.71
45	I want to prepare myself for student teaching.	4.63
41	I want to gain confidence in myself as a teacher.	4.61
49	I want to find out how to keep students interested in learning.	4.60
7	I want to begin to develop my own teaching style.	4.56
8	I want to know what is expected of me in the teaching profession.	4.54
4	I want to get experience in front of a group of students.	4.54
8	I want to learn how to keep the attention of the whole class.	4.54

To determine the underlying constructs that might be inferred from clusters of expectations, a common factor analysis technique was employed. Following construction of a correlation matrix, the data were subjected to principle axis rotation to maximize the amount of variance accounted for in the factor solution. Squared multiple correlations were used as estimates of communality. The procedures used were specified by computer package SPSS.

Four criteria were used to determine the number of factors present: Cattell's Scree Test, the discontinuity criteria, Kaiser's Eigenvalue-one, and subjective interpretability. These criteria suggested a six-factor solution. That solution was accepted for final oblique promax rotation to produce a relatively meaningful factor pattern.

Upon examination, the factors were named and described in terms of pre-student teacher expectations for early field experiences. The names and general descriptions given each factor are provided below:

Factor 1: Expectations for Assessing the Complexities of Teaching
Prospective teachers expect to develop a better understanding of their own abilities to perform in the teaching role and to make some assessment, based on observations of "real" teachers, of their own pedagogical strengths and weaknesses.

Factor 2: Expectations for Modeling Professional Practice
Prospective teachers expect to discover the subtleties of successful teaching and to develop an in-depth understanding of what it takes to be effective in the classroom.

Factor 3: Expectations for Acquiring Practical Insights and Ideas
Prospective teachers expect that early field experiences will provide them with an opportunity to acquire some practical and specific ideas for successful performance.

Factor 4: Expectations for Practicing Teaching Skills
Prospective teachers expect that early field experiences will provide an opportunity to practice teaching skills, such as lecturing, and to test their decision-making abilities.

Factor 5: Expectations for Understanding Various School and Classroom Settings
Prospective teachers expect that field experiences will enable them to understand how different teachers function in the same school setting and to see how different teachers react to classroom problems in diverse cultural contents.

Factor 6: Expectations for Dealing Directly with Students
Prospective teachers expect that early field experiences will serve as an opportunity to deal directly with students and to work with students who have special learning needs.

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to identify the expectations of early field experience students and group them into areas through the use of factor analysis. Those areas or factors will now be discussed.

The first factor related to the early field experience students' expectations for assessing the complexities of teaching. Prospective teachers want to learn how veteran teachers perform as they assess their own instructional strengths and weaknesses. They want to see what it takes to keep students on task and involved in learning as they imagine or practice the skills they see cooperating teachers use. They hope through field experiences to discover more about the profession and themselves as professionals. Preservice teachers also view field experiences as an opportunity to determine whether teaching is the right career choice and to ascertain the degree to which they will enjoy teaching.

The second factor related to the prospective teachers' ability to model professional practice. Field experience students want to learn how to handle the myriad details of classroom life. They want to see what is expected of them as a professional teacher by observing a cooperating teacher and to begin to test, at least in a general sense,

whether they can perform in accordance with those expectations. They want to find the answers to questions like: How does a teacher organize a classroom for instruction? How does a teacher deal with the exigencies of classroom life? How do teacher-student relationships develop? And, what will students expect of prospective teachers?

Gathering ideas and acquiring insights into teaching constituted the third factor. Prospective teachers view field experiences as an opportunity to see how teachers function and more specifically they want to collect ideas and materials for use when they are responsible for instruction. Preservice teachers want to see how to discipline students, how to arrange curricular materials and how to deal with the unique learning needs of each student. They want to see what instructional strategies are most effective and to determine how students react to the various modes of instruction. Finally, they want to learn the specifics of managing student behavior and interacting effectively with parents, principals and other teachers.

The fourth factor dealt with the field experience students' expectations vis-a-vis the actual practice of teaching skills. The first three factors dealt with expectations that were passive and focused more on observing teachers at work. The expectations in the fourth factor had a more active quality. Prospective teachers expected that they would be able to begin to develop their own instructional style and to see what it would be like to stand in front of a group of students. The expectations focused on the preservice teachers' ability to actually practice what they have learned. They expected to have opportunities to teach a whole class of students and to practice some of of the management techniques they learned in methods courses or observed

in the classes of their cooperating teacher. In essence, prospective teachers viewed the field experiences as an opportunity to begin making their own instructional choices.

The fifth factor related to the preservice teachers' expectations for understanding how education takes place in different settings. Field experience students want to see how students in different classroom and cultural contexts respond to instruction. By observing and interacting with a variety of teachers, prospective teachers hope to be able to understand how they would respond when they have responsibility for teaching. Prospective teachers realize that they may not be able to dictate the location of their first teaching assignment. Hence they appear to desire exposure to many different settings to facilitate understanding of how different students learn and behave. Preservice teachers also want to observe how certain pedagogical concepts, like team teaching, are implemented and practiced. By observing many different teachers, field experience students hope to develop a better sense of how various teaching techniques can be used in the classroom.

Finally, prospective teachers see the field experiences as an opportunity to deal directly with students in their new role as teacher. Many have only been out of high school for a year (or less) when they have their first field experience. They are struggling to adapt their behavior to the new role and they want opportunities to work with students in tutorial and small group situations, situations that offer a measure of protection since the preservice teacher need only work with (and attend to) a couple of students, not a whole class. They expect that such situations will not only enhance their own professional

growth, but also serve as a mechanism for helping students who are having real learning difficulties.

The factors described above, of course, are not mutually exclusive. There is a degree of conceptual overlap in the emergent categories. However, the groupings do provide a context for sorting through the myraid expectations of preservice teachers. They provide a framework for understanding what the prospective teachers perceive will happen once they enter classrooms as field experience students. More importantly, they suggest to teacher educators that field experience students cannot be treated as though they were a tabula rasa. Prospective teachers have a definite sense of what they believe about schools and teachers. In the next section the researchers will suggest that the expectations and beliefs identified in this research must be taken into account if field experiences are to be truly effective.

IMPLICATIONS

Preservice teachers have high expectations for what will occur during field experiences. As cited earlier Book, Byers and Freeman (1983) found that along with student teaching, preservice teachers view early field experiences as the most important part of their teacher education programs. They perceive, in particular, field experiences as a time for learning what teaching is about and for practicing what they have learned in methods courses.

This research on expectations suggest that preservice teachers should be clearly instructed relative to the purpose of field experiences. They should be specifically told what to expect during each experience and what they will accomplish. Expectations that are spurious or unrealistic should be challenged in terms of the overall

purpose of the field component. Prospective teachers need to have their expectations carefully molded in terms of realistic teacher education goals.

There is little doubt that cooperating teachers serve as a powerful force in shaping the behavior of prospective teachers. Copeland (1979), Price (1961) and Seperson and Joyce (1973) have all documented the significance of the cooperating teachers' influence during student teaching. This investigation suggests that preservice teachers are expecting to look to cooperating teachers for practical ideas and insights. Cooperating teachers are viewed as a potential resource and model for practice. Hence, even when students are placed in classrooms just to observe "what kids are like," it seems essential to select placements that will engender positive professional role models in which prospective teachers can acquire the best possible understanding of what constitutes good classroom practice.

Teacher educators may also find it useful to build field experience components around the natural inclinations (or expectations) of preservice teachers. Prospective teachers view field experiences as opportunities for "real" learning; they expect to emerge from field experiences better equipped to deal with many of the problems of teaching. When such expectations are met, prospective teachers will likely experience a sense of satisfaction. When the expectations are not met, frustration and disenchantment will surface. Though it would not be possible or desirable to structure programs to address all preservice expectations, it may be deleterious to ignore expectations that have a strong relationship to the preservice teachers' perceived ability to perform successfully in the classroom.

Finally, this study suggests that teacher educators should develop field experiences that both complement and build on the conceptual whole of the teacher education curriculum. Preservice teachers expect that field experiences are more than an opportunity to interact with real children. They expect that field experiences will enable them to learn about the profession, both in a specific and general sense. As a result, teacher educators should view the field component in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. A small number of quality, will planned experiences will be more efficacious than numerous poorly planned field placements.

This study has attempted to add the expectations of field experience students to the knowledge base existing about field-based experiences. The literature and this study suggests that field experiences represent an important time of professional development and socialization for preservice teachers, and the nature of their expectations often serves to determine the extent of their growth. Teacher educators who understand what preservice teachers expect will be in a position to modify those expectations in terms of extant program goals. Complementary studies focusing on the problems of early field experience students and the expectations and problems of university supervisors are being conducted by the authors as logical next steps.

Factor 1

Expectations for Assessing
the Complexities of Teaching

Item Rank	Item No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	49	I want to find out how to keep students interested in learning.	.800
2	48	I want to learn how to keep the attention of the whole class.	.795
3	47	I want to learn more about myself--my own strengths and weaknesses.	.769
4	57	I want to make sure that teaching is the career for me.	.760
5	56	I want to see if I am really going to like teaching.	.747
6	46	I want to learn how teachers deal with attendance, grades, testing and all the organizational details.	.706
7	53	I want to gain a better understanding of the special needs of certain students, especially those with handicaps or learning difficulties.	.684
8	52	I want to see how teachers establish and meet long term and short term goals.	.675
9	50	I want to be able to recognize my "weak spots" in teaching and learn how to remedy them.	.644

Factor 2

Expectations for Modeling
Professional Practice

Item Rank	Item No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	40	I want to talk to my cooperating teacher about what teaching is really like.	.622
2	41	I want to gain confidence in myself as a teacher.	.613
3	43	I want to become more acquainted with my future profession.	.568
4	12	I want to see how teachers make and enforce rules for the class.	.546
5	39	I want to see if I really have any talent teaching.	.541
6	33	I want to learn to recognize the different kinds of problems that teachers face during a school day.	.527
7	44	I want to find out how teachers organize their classroom.	.521
8	45	I want to prepare myself for student teaching.	.505
9	36	I want to learn about all the things teachers do, both inside and outside of the classroom.	.501
10	34	I want to learn how to deal with the unexpected.	.490
11	35	I want to see how teacher-student relationships develop.	.469
12	11	I want to learn what to expect of the students and what the students will expect of me.	.456
13	8	I want to know what is expected of me in the teaching profession.	.439
14	10	I want to become acquainted with a teacher in my field and see how she/he teaches.	.424
15	18	I want to get over my shyness in the classroom.	.364

Factor 3

Expectations for Acquiring
Practical Insights and Ideas

Item Rank	Item No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	22	I want to see how teachers work with parents, the principal and other teachers.	.667
2	25	I want to see how a school functions.	.619
3	17	I want to get some good ideas about how to control the students.	.599
4	26	I want to learn more about students' learning needs.	.574
5	23	I want to see how teachers discipline students.	.565
6	21	I want to learn about the instructional materials and resources available to teachers.	.545
7	20	I want to gain a better understanding of the overall duties of a teacher.	.531
8	27	I want to be able to pass on some of my knowledge to students.	.528
9	28	I want to see how students react to different methods of teaching.	.513
10	31	I want to learn more about the different teaching techniques.	.375

Factor 4

Expectations for Practicing Teaching Skills

Item Rank	Item No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	32	I want the chance to teach the whole class.	.649
2	29	I want to try out in real classrooms some of the instructional methods I have learned in my college classes.	.545
3	15	I want the opportunity to practice classroom management skills.	.415
4	4	I want to get experience in front of a group of students.	.405
5	16	I want to practice making my own instructional choices and decisions.	.400
6	55	I want to test some of the theories I have learned in classes.	.333
7	24	I want to get experience thinking on my feet by answering students' questions and correcting problems.	.322
8	30	I want to learn more about planning realistic lessons.	.317
9	7	I want to begin to develop my own teaching style.	.304

Factor 5

Expectations for Understanding
Various School and Classroom Settings

Item Rank	Item No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	13	I want to see and learn more about urban or inner city schools.	.580
2	51	I want to see how inner city schools differ from suburban schools.	.558
3	42	I want to learn more about team teaching and how it works.	.411
4	37	I want to work with students in different grade levels to see how students change over time.	.356
5	38	I want to find out which grade level I will best at teaching.	.336
6	2	I want to observe a variety of teachers in a school setting.	.299

Factor 6

Expectations for Dealing Directly with Students

Item Rank	Item No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	3	I want to gain some ideas to make my lessons more interesting.	.537
2	9	I want the chance to work with students in small groups.	.458
3	19	I want to provide help to students who are having trouble in school.	.325
4	54	I want a chance to work one-to-one with students.	.255

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